

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ABU DH 01705 01 OF 02 170957Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----118368 171001Z /11

R 170822Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8004  
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
AMEMBASSY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1705

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TC  
SUBJECT: POLITICAL TENSION IN UAE

REFS: (A) ABU DHABI 1689, (B) ABU DHABI 1551, (C) STATE 141246

BEGIN SUMMARY: UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID BELIEVES EMIRATES,  
PARTICULARLY DUBAI HAVE BENEFITTED ENORMOUSLY FROM UNION. WHILE  
HE HAS TOLD DUBAI IT FREE TO LEAVE UAE, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE  
SHAIKH RASHID IS SERIOUS. HOWEVER, IF BASIC ISSUES SUCH AS  
MILITARY UNIFICATION ARE NOT RESOLVED BEFORE JQOIQ PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTIONS, UAE IN FOR SERIOUS TROUDLE. END SUMMARY

1. I CALLED ON UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID ON JUNE 15 AT HIS OFFICE  
IN AL AIN TO FOLLOW UP MY EARLIER DISCUSSIONS SITH FOREIGN MINISTER  
SUWAIDI ON CURRENT POLITICAL DISARRAY WITHIN THE EMIRATES (REF A).  
AFTER READING TO ZAYID THE POINTS I HAD MADE TO SHAIKH RASHID OF  
DUBAI ON MAY 31 (SEE PARA 3 OF REF B), I SAID I HAD SINCE RECEIVED  
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INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT WHICH EMBELLISHED ON MY EARLIER  
REMARKS AND WHICH REFLECTED ON THE IMPORTANCE THE USG PLACES IN SEEINT

THE EMIRATES WORK OUT THEIR PROBLEM WITHIN THE FEDERAL CONTEXT. AFTER

REVIEWING THE POINTS CONTAINED IN PARA 2 OF DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS  
(REF C), I CONCLUDED BY STATION THAT WE RECOGNIZED THAT THE UAE

IS THE ONLY FEDERATION IN THE ARAB WORLD AND THIS IS A UNIQUE EXPERIMENT. BECAUSE OF OUR OWN HISTORY WITH FEDERALISM, WE WERE ESPECIALLY SYMPATHETIC WITH UAE DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN FEDERAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHILE PRESERVING COHESION TO ASSURE INTERNAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

2. ZAYID'S RESPONSE WAS PHILOSOPHICAL AND STATESMANLIKE. FEDERALISM OBVIOUSLY STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD AND HE TALKED FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES ON HIS CONCEPT OF FEDERATION WHICH HE SEES AS THE ONLY FEASIBLE PATTERN FOR SMALL FRAGMENTED STATES TO ADOPT IF THEY ARE TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF THE MODERN WORLD. ZAYID FELT THAT THE EMIRATES IN THE UAE HAD BENEFITTED ENORMOUSLY FROM THE UNION, DUBAI MOST OF ALL. HE RECALLED HIS EARLY EFFORTS TO GET THE GREATER FEDERATION OF NINE GOING AND TO ASSOCIATE DUBAI WITH THIS EFFORT. AS PART OF THE EFFORT, HE HAD AGREED IN 1968 TO BEND THE ABU DHABI BOUNDARY LINE NEAR THE COAST 12 KILOMETERS TO THE WEST IN DUBAI'S FAVOR, THEREBY PERMITTING DUBAI TO EXPLOIT THE LARGE OFFSHORE OIL FIELD WHICH IS THE MAINSTAY OF ITS ECONOMY. BUT DUBAI HAD BENEFITTED EVEN MORE FROM FEDERAL EXPENDITURES FOR ROADS, SCHOOLS, COMMUNICATIONS, HOSPITALS, ETC. AS WELL AS FROM ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF THE UNION. DUBAI'S COMMERCIAL POSITION HAD BENEFITTED IN THE MOST UAE IMPORTS HAVE COME THROUGH DUBAI WITH DUBAI MERCHANT COMMUNITY GETTING ITS FOREIGN EXCHANGE FROM THE UAE CURRENCY BOARD EVEN THOUGH DUBAI DEPOSITS VIRTUALLY NONE OF ITS FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS WITH UAE MONETARY AUTHORITIES.

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3. ZAYID ATTRIBUTED A LOT OF THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES OF MAHDI TAJIR'S INFLUENCE. THROUGH HIS COMMISSIONS AND BUSINESS DEALINGS, TAJIR HAD BECOME VERY RICH. NO ONE KNEW HOW DUBAI'S INCOME WAS REALLY BEING SPENT NOR WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE. NONE OF RASHID'S SONS KNOW WHAT MAHDI IS UP TO. YET DESPITE HIS WEALTH, MAHDI WANTS MORE AND IS INTERESTED IN SEEING THAT HIS PERSONAL INTERESTS ARE NOT DISADVANTAGED BY EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE FEDERAL UNION.

4. ZAYID THEN SAID HE HAD TRIED TO GET RASHID TO TAKE ON MORE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF FEDERAL LEADERSHIP. HE HAD OFFERED HIM THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UAE WHICH RASHID HAD REFUSED. HE HAD ALSO URGED TO RASHID TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF RUNNING THE FEDERATION FOR THREE, TWO, OR EVEN ONE YEAR TO TRY TO MAKE HIM EXPERIENCE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF RUNNING A COUNTRY. RASHID WANTED THE ADVANTAGES OF THE UNION BUT WITHOUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES. MOREOVER, RASHID OBJECTED IF OTHER RULERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF SHARJAH, FUJAIRAH, AND AJMAN, WANTED TO PLAY A FEDERAL ROLE. HE REGRETTED THAT RASHID COULD NOT SHOW TO OTHERS THE SAME MAGNANIMITY

SHOWN HIM BY ZAYID, CITING THE STILL FESTERING BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN DUBAI AND SHARJAH. BECAUSE OF DUBAI'S UNWILLINGNESS TO SUBMIT TO THE

JUDGEMENT OF THE UAE'S OWN LEGAL SYSTEM, THE DISPUTE HAS GONE TO INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION. THE AREA INVOLVED IS ONLY A FEW KILOMETERS

AND COULD BE SETTLED IMMEDIATELY AND EASILY BY DIVIDING THE DISPUTED AREA IN HALF.

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
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AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1705

EXDIS

5. ON MILITARY UNIFICATION, ZAYID REITERATED MANY OF THE POINTS MADE EARLIER BY SUWAITI, E.G., IF EACH EMIRATE HAS ITS OWN ARMY, IT WILL OPEN UP THE UAE FOR OUTSIDERS TO PLAY ONE RULER AGAINST THE OTHER. HE WAS AWARE OF RASHID'S CRITICISMS OF THE APPOINTMENT OF ZAYID'S SECOND SON, SHAIKH SULTAN, AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES BECAUSE HE IS TOO YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED, AND YET TO PROVE HIS METTLE. BUT WHO ELSE IS THERE? UAE IS A VERY YOUNG COUNTRY. ZAYID SAID HE HAD ACQUIESCED WHEN RASHID INSISTED ON HAVING THREE OF HIS SONS BE MINISTERS (PRIME MINISTER, DEFENSE, FINANCE) YET NONE OF ZAYID'S SONS HOLD MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS BECAUSE RASHID HAD OBJECTED.

6. ZAYID THEN SAID THAT HE HAD TOLD RASHID THAT IF DUBAI WANTED TO LEAVE THE UNION, IT WAS FREE TO DO SO. BUT IF IT TOOK SUCH ACTION, ZAYID WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO HELP ASSURE DUBAI'S OWN

SECURITY AND DUBAI WOULD LOSE THE MANY ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL  
ADVANTAGES IF HAD GAINED AS MEMBER OF THE UAE. ZAYID DID NOT  
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THINK RASHID WAS SERIOUS ABOUT LEAVING THE FEDERATION ALTHOUGH  
HE SAID DUBAI HAD SENT OUT FEELERS TO OTHER COUNTRIES (PRESUMABLY  
IRAN AND UK) TO SEE WHETHER THEY WOULD SUPPORT DUBAI'S EFFORTS  
TO RETURN TO A LOOSER FEDERATION THAT LEFT DEFENSE AND SECURITY  
ESSENTIALLY IN THE HANDS OF EACH EMIRATE.

7. TO MY QUESTION ABOUT THE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY WHEN NEXT  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OCCUR IN 1981, ZAYID AGREED THAT THIS COULD  
BE A CRITICAL PERIOD FOR THE UAE IF DISPUTES NOW EXISTING AMONG THE  
EMIRATES ARE NOT RESOLVED. HE COMMENTED THAT THIS IS SOMETHING TO  
WHICH OTHER RULERS ARE NOT GIVING SUFFICIENT THOUGHT. TO ANOTHER  
QUESTION ABOUT MY CALLING ON SHAIKH RASHID AGAIN TO REITERATE  
U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE UNION, ZAYID MADE INTERESTING OBSERVATION  
THAT MANY AMBASSADORS, CITING THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR IN PARTICULAR,  
HAVE RECENTLY BEEN GOING BACK AND FORTH AMONG THE RULERS REPEATING  
-- OFTEN INCORRECTLY -- STATEMENTS OF ONE TO THE OTHER AND THUS  
CAUSING CONFUSION. I SAID I COULD APPRECIATE HIS COMMENTS.  
WE HAD  
TRIED TO AVOID COMMENTING ON SPECIFIC ISSUES OR OF TRYING TO  
PLAY THE ROLE OF MESSENGER BETWEEN RULERS AND I HOPED THAT  
MY DIPLOMATIC APPROACHES WOULD NOT BE SEEN AS CARRYING TALES FROM  
ONE RULER TO ANOTHER.

8. COMMENT: NEVER HAVE I SEEN ZAYID IN BETTER FORM. HE WAS  
RELAXED AND SELF-CONFIDENT. HE IS CLEARLY COMMITTED TO THE  
FEDERAL EXPERIMENT AND REPEATEDLY USED ADJECTIVE "FEDERALIYYAH"  
RATHER THAN ARABIC WORD "ITTIHAADI" WHICH IS MUCH MORE RESTRICTIVE.  
HE FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT OTHER RULERS WILL NOT THROW AWAY ECONOMIC  
ADVANTAGES UNION HAS BROUGHT THEM. EXCEPT FOR HIS COMMENTS ON  
MAHDI TAJIR, ZAYID SHOWED NO BITTERNESS OR VINDICTIVENESS NOR DID HE  
TRY TO CONVINCE ME OF HIS POSITION. GIVEN ZAYID'S ATTITUDE  
AND CURRENT SUSPICIONS THAT TAJIR APPROACHED THE IRANIANS TO SEE  
IF THEY WOULD SUPPORT DUBAI'S POSITION, WE WONDER IF TAJIR'S

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DAYS AS UAE AMBASSADOR TO HMG ARE NOT NUMBERED.  
DICKMAN

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## Message Attributes

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